

Are there redundant suffixes in Hebrew? A view from inflection and derivation

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The study examines cases of what appears like redundant suffixes in Hebrew inflection and derivation. This is demonstrated in the online examples in (1).

(1) a. ha-ibud hu kanire šel ha-**čel-an** žul delsar

‘the (musical) arrangement is probably an arrangement of the cellist Jules Delsar’

(<http://jocheved.blogspot.com/2011/11>)

b. rafi be-acmo hafax le-**čel-an-ist**

Rafi himself became a cellist’ (<https://www.mako.co.il/culture-movies/articles/Article-b3441006.htm>)

The agent noun ‘cellist’, which is derived from *čelo* ‘cello’, is formed by suffixation of *-an* in (1a), while in (1b) it also takes the suffix *-ist*, which has the same function and is attached independently to other nouns (*gitara* ‘guitar’ - *gitar-ist* ‘guitar player’). There seems to be one redundant suffix in (1b), as there is no semantic difference between *čel-an* and *čel-an-ist*. I will show that while such cases are relatively infrequent, the formation of such forms follow systematic guidelines. The formation of over-marked words is usually not redundant, and serves some semantic function. Methodology is based on online web searched where emphasis is on the contrast between items that were found to different extents and items that were not found at all or are extremely rare. Adjective and nouns (depends on the case) were searched with sequences of two suffixes as detailed below. The study address three case studies.

Double marking of feminine forms

Examine the following sentences in (2). The word *šakran* ‘liar’ takes the feminine suffix *-it* in (2a), while in (2b) it takes *-a* in addition to *-it*, yielding an apparent over-marking.

(2) a. himcet et ze be-acmex ya **šakran-it**

‘You made it up yourself, you liar’ (<https://sports.walla.co.il/item/3071716>)

b. ze rak od xaci šaa ya **šakran-it-a**

‘It’s only in half an hour, you liar’ (<https://www.starmed.co.il/forum-67/msg-2649006>)

Hebrew has three feminine suffixes: *-a*, *-it*, *-et*. Suffix selection is predictable based on properties of the base, but is subject to irregularity. *-et* is the least productive and is not discussed here. Competition is mainly between *-a* and *-it*. *-a* consists of the unmarked vowel *a* and is attached to a variety of stems. *-it* is the default suffix in acronyms and loanwords (Schwarzwald 1982, 2002, 2013 Faust 2013). Words that end with *-an* (whether it is a suffix or part of the *CaCCan* pattern) systematically *-it*, e.g. *šaclan* – *šaclan-it* ‘lazy’. Some of them take *-a* together with *-it* (2b). This apparent over-marking seems random at first glance. However, examination of the data reveals that it only occurs with words with negative meaning, e.g. *xucpan* – *xucpan-it/xucpan-it-a* ‘insolent’, *paxdan* – *paxdan-it/paxdan-it-a* ‘coward’. The addition of *-a* aims at emphasizing the negative meaning, while *-it* only marks gender. Words that end with *-an* with no negative meaning, do not take *-a*, e.g. *šakdan* – *šakdan-it/*šakdan-it-a* ‘industrious’. It seems that the suffix *-a* serves an evaluative function of depreciation (see Scalise 1984, Stump 1993, Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015, Amiot & Stosic 2022).

Double marking of adjectival/agentive forms

The suffixes *-an* and *-ist* are attached to nouns to form both agent nouns and adjectives. *-an* is native while *-ist* is borrowed, and *-an* can also be part of the *CaCCan* pattern, which is used both for adjective and agent nouns (e.g. *dabran* ‘talkative’ and *saxkan* ‘actor’) (Boložky 1999). There are cases where *-ist* is added to words that end with *-an*, with no change of meaning or lexical category (1). Unlike the example in (1b), where the addition of *-ist* seems indeed redundant, examination of more data reveals that in most cases it is not redundant. For example, the adjective *xucp-an* ‘insolent’ (3a) is formed by attaching *-an* to the noun *xucpa* ‘audacity’. In (3b), it is added with the suffix *-ist*,

yielding *xucp-an-ist* ‘insolent’, and as shown in (3), both *xucp-an* and *xucp-an-ist* can be used in similar contexts.

(3) a. *titbayeš lexa xucp-an*

‘shame on you, (you) insolent’ (https://x.com/moshe_primo/status/1710778454826758596)

b. *mi hirša lexa xucp-an-ist*

‘who gave you permission, (you) insolent’ (<https://padlet.com/yuh250994/padlet-s9suu9qfgfvk>)

Similarly to the case of double marking of feminine forms above, I argue that the addition of *-an* usually has an evaluative function of emphasizing agentivity, especially with respect to negative meaning. The addition of *-ist* to *-an* ending words was found mainly in words with negative meaning, e.g. *šakran - šakran-ist* ‘liar’, *xartetan - xartetan-ist* ‘babblers’. In addition, it is found only with words that denote humans, and it emphasizes the agentivity and typical behavior related to the relevant negative trait. This is also because *-an* is more typical for adjectives, and *-ist* is more typical for agent noun formation.

It is important to note that in both cases of apparent over-marking, affix ordering is systematic. *-a* follows *-it*, and *-ist* follows *-an*. This is because both *-a* and *-ist* serve an evaluative function, that is added only after the first suffix creates the main grammatical or semantic change.

Double marking of plural forms

Some words take the plural suffix twice, as shown in (4).

(4) *ahalan xamud-im-im!* *mitragšim ve-mexakim la-hofaa*

‘hi cute-PL-PL (ones)! (we are) excited and waiting for the show’

(https://www.facebook.com/Tammybenhadar/posts/517874965064204/?locale=hi_IN)

The word *xamud* ‘cute’ takes the masculine plural suffix twice. Examination of more such cases reveals that this is also not random, and such over-marked formed surface mainly in words with ameliorative meaning, denoting some affection and ‘cuteness’. In addition, they occur mainly in vocative forms and this also emphasizes their evaluative function. Further research is need to examine why this over marking exists in some languages but not in others.

In all three cases, there does not seem to be one complex suffix as each of the affixes make some independent contribution to the meaning and/or grammatical function of the word. Such cases will also be compared to what looks like complex suffixes in Hebrew. For example, Hebrew *-onet* (e.g. *sira* ‘boat’ - *sironet* ‘little boat’), which consists of both the diminutive suffix *-on* and the feminine suffix *-et* (see Schwarzwald 1982, 2002, Bat-El 1997, Faust 2013).

Examination of the three case studies suggest that morphological over-marking in Hebrew applies according to systematic guidelines in both inflection and derivation. The two suffixes can be both inflectional and both derivational. In most cases the additional suffix is not redundant, but serves some evaluative function. This seems to be a case where inflection and derivation follow the same principle despite the many differences between them.

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